

CENTER SCENE



The Bureau of Land Management Service Center Newsletter

July 1987

Paper, Paper, Paper

Ever wonder what happens to all that financial information you complete on purchase requisitions, deposit tickets, T&As, training forms, travel vouchers, etc.? You know these documents are sent directly or indirectly to the SC Division of Finance, but what do they do with them? You must think accounting types have an insatiable appetite for paper.

Actually, the people in Finance don't necessarily appreciate the deluge of paper. In fact, they are constantly looking for ways, within the context of the many laws and regulations, to minimize the volume of paper. Several efforts are underway to eliminate this paper flow by taking advantage of existing technologies.

An example of one of these efforts is the new motor vehicle system. This system, developed by Administrative Services and Finance, no longer requires motor vehicle usage forms to be submitted to the SC. Offices now enter data via computer terminals to report usage to GSA and financial data for BLM.

Another project being developed is the Automated System for Acquisition Processing (ASAP). It envisions, among other things, electronic transmission of financial data from field offices at the time a requisition is issued, a purchase order/contract is cut, and when the goods or services are received from a vendor.

Finance is exploring other opportunities to reduce paper flow, and increase economy and efficiency. Financial data relating to range and lease transactions will soon be submitted electronically. The effort for remote entry of T&As may be able to overcome the legal and organizational restraints necessary to develop a paperless (or near paperless) T&A.

Upcoming Events

Multicultural Day Observance

July 15

Bicentennial Park

Women's Equality Day Observance

August 25

Bldg. 50-West/Cent

Patriotic Celebration

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. An original one-act musical play, **FOUR LITTLE PAGES**, will be presented Tuesday, July 14 at 11:00 a.m. in Centennial Park (just south of Building 40) to commemorate the event. Sponsored by the Denver Federal Executive Board, the play is free to all employees.

Management Analysts Met

Tom Allen, Assistant Director, Management Services, addressed a joint meeting of BLM Management Analysts and Program Evaluators in Reno in May. To Management Analysts he stressed the importance of Bureau managers finding more efficient ways to conduct Bureau business, particularly with tight budget constraints. He recommended reorganization be evaluated in terms of reduced overhead and more efficient work processes.

He took much the same stance relative to evaluations. General Management and Special Program Evaluations should emphasize the above goals. In addition, evaluators should be looking for ways of helping managers correct problems and get away from the inspector role.

During the week the 40 attendees met in work groups to develop and present proposals aimed at accomplishing the efficiencies espoused by Allen. Topics included workload analysis techniques; reorganizations and their impact on employees; analytical processes; and program evaluation policy.

At the end of the week four managers gave their impressions of the workshop and urged the participant to use their initiative to help management uncover areas of potential savings. The managers were: Bob Moore, SCD; Pieter Van Zanden, Idaho Associate State Director; John Rump, Anchorage District Manager, and Sandra Sacher, Miles City Associate District Manager.

Use of Expanding Technology

Data processing technology, due primarily to the development of microcomputers, has expanded rapidly in recent years. BLM has many types of programming languages, file structures and hardware. Source languages available include COBOL, FORTRAN, and a fourth generation language, ASPEN II. dBASE III and PC-FOCUS are just two of many similar packages available for micros. Sequential, indexed-sequential, network databases, and relational databases are the most often used file structures. We have a DPS-8 mainframe, several mini-computers and microcomputers made by many manufacturers.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of hardware and software. For instance, some software is powerful, easy to use and allows fast development of computer applications. However, this type of software is generally limited in capabilities and uses computer resources inefficiently. File structures differ in that some permit efficient space usage while others enable speedy access to large volumes of data. Network databases require much preliminary expenditure of personnel resources due to extensive analysis and schema/subschema generation, yet, they can provide long-term benefits due to the fast access to large amounts of data by multiple users. Mainframes have powerful processing and data storage capabilities while micros allow use of sophisticated, user-friendly software in an unrestricted environment.

Data processors, when selecting the hardware and software to be used on new applications and rewrites, will often limit their choices to products that they know best. This can result in inefficient and hard-to-maintain computer applications.

Systems analysts, project leaders and managers have the opportunity to gain exposure to the capabilities of a wide range of data processing tools. Applied objectively, this knowledge enables them to produce efficient, cost-effective solutions to user problems and innovative methods to address additional needs.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA

History Buff

What was your favorite subject in school? Most of us probably wouldn't single out history; however, for a dedicated few, history comes alive and opens up new worlds. Jim Muhn is one such individual.

Jim is BLM's only Land Law Historian. Originally, Jim hired on as an historian for BLM's cultural resource program at the Montana SO. He found that most cultural sites in Montana dated back to the mining and homesteading eras. This meant that he had to spend much time researching old BLM and General Land Office land records.

Jim became more fascinated with old records and the various land disposal and administration statutes. Leigh Freeman, an MSO paralegal encouraged Jim and became both teacher and mentor. Jim ultimately took a leave of absence to work on a Master's degree, concentrating on the history of American agriculture and Federal land policy.

When Jim returned to BLM, Freeman had retired. Jim was offered his position and became a "Land Law Historian."

Jim transferred to the SC Branch of Records and Library in May 1986. Most of his work here involves research for the Justice Department or the Solicitor's Office and pertains to past laws and their administration by DOI and its agencies.

Jim recently completed his Master's thesis. It deals with the Mizpah-Pumpkin Creek Grazing District. This District was the first attempt to regulate grazing on the public lands through leasing. Before creation of this district, grass was used on a first-come, first-served basis, with stockmen severely overgrazing land leaving nothing for their competitors.

The Mizpah-Pumpkin Creek Grazing District represents an important chapter in our agency's history. Jim intends to put a copy of his thesis in our SC library. It is well written and is a good "read."

Jim, along with Larry Pointer and Chip Calamaio at the Phoenix Training Center, recently produced a video history of BLM and the public lands. He is very proud of the film and intends to provide several showings this summer to SC personnel.

Jim Muhn is another of the unique resources here at the SC. His expertise is widely respected both within and outside BLM, and he is genuinely interested in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

ALMRS-GIS Brief

It has been said that ALMRS stands not for the Automated Land and Mineral Records System, but for "A Lot of Meetings Running Simultaneously."

Discussions of how to produce the most user-friendly, cost-effective automated records system are taking place at all levels of Government. Two recent meetings, one with a Bureau audience and the other with private industry's high tech segment, signified the progress that ALMRS has made in the past year.

In May ALMRS, GIS, GCDB, and LIS coordinators met for one day of training about the BLM's Land Information Strategy (LIS). For many participants it was the first time to meet their counterparts who are working other pieces of the land information puzzle.

Duane Sonnenberg, HQ Land Information Coordinator, defined our LIS goal as "linking the national land and mineral record system through ALMRS, and the National Public Land Survey System using GCDB, with the BLM resource information data base."

Integrating these elements will provide land managers with more timely and accurate information to make better decisions. The LIS Seminar was a step in the process of integrating Bureau data bases, and perhaps more important, the many people whose efforts will be required to produce a successful LIS.

In May, computer software, hardware and integration vendors from throughout the U.S. came to hear the latest information about the upcoming ALMRS software procurement. Over 160 professionals from 76 companies participated in the day-long RFI (Request for Information) conference designed to stimulate interest in the ALMRS project.

RFI from private enterprise recently attracted over 50 detailed responses to technical questions facing the Project Office at the SC. The May RFI conference gave interested vendors the chance to ask questions of a panel of BLM representatives from Washington and the SC.

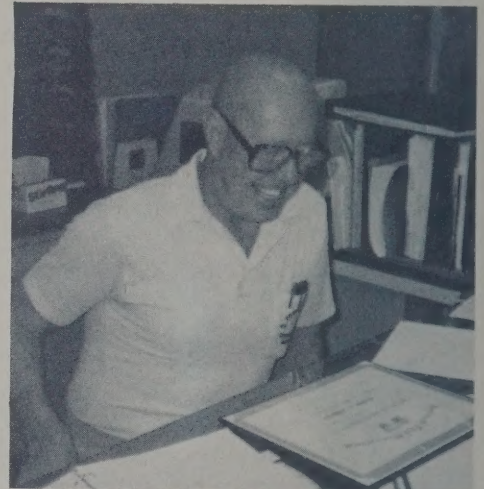
The audience seemed impressed that the Bureau was displaying growing expertise in automation technologies while dealing with the many complexities of multiple use land management. They were pleased to have BLM get early involvement from industry. Participants stated that it will get the users a far superior product, on schedule, and at the most economical costs.

Larkins Completes 40

Harry Larkins has completed 40 years of government service. He enlisted in the Navy in '43 at age 17, and left after serving 1 1/2 years. The Navy didn't find out until too late that he'd lied about his age.

In '47 he was unemployed and just wanted a job. When an opportunity to work for the Commodity Administration and Production and Marketing Administration, USDA, presented itself, he accepted. He worked there until 1952 when he joined BLM at the Portland Service Center. When that closed he came to Denver.

Is Harry going for his 50-year-pin? No, he says he has his sights set on retiring on December 30, 1988. Harry — retire? Not really! He will continue teaching, practicing and officiating marshall arts, especially Judo and self defense.



Harry receives his 40-year pin.

Softball Champs

Latebreaking word from the softball diamonds...Moody's Blues has thumped Hit or Miss for the SC Championship, 22-9. This is the second year in a row the "upstarts" from ALMRS-GIS have beaten back the perennial SC favorites.

There were plenty of heroes from the Blues. Bob Ader slugged four homeruns in four-at-bats. Manager Brian Bernard got the defensive honors for faking a baserunner into a pickle between third base and home.

Losing manager Nathan Matthews couldn't think of any standouts on Hit or Miss, citing that his team's many errors were evenly distributed. Blues Manager William Moody was generous in the wake of the victory. "If they practice a lot we may give them a rematch next year."